

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Office Action dated January 15, 2004.

In this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 2, and added new claims 13-20 to more clearly define the claimed invention. Claims 1 and 6 are the sole independent claims.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 1-12 were pending in this application, with claims 6-12 having been withdrawn from consideration. After entry of this Amendment, claims 1-20 are pending in this application, with claims 6-12 still having been withdrawn from consideration.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the subject matter of amended claims 1 and 2, and new claims 13-20. No new matter was introduced.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,038,050 to Minoura et al. ("Minoura"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. For anticipation under 35 U.S.C. §102, the reference must teach every aspect of the claimed invention either explicitly or implicitly. M.P.E.P. 706.02. Because Minoura does not teach every aspect of claims 1-5 or 13-20 either alone or in combination with the other aspects of the claimed invention, Minoura does not anticipate any of those claims.

Minoura does not disclose or suggest the invention claimed in independent claim 1. For example, independent claim 1 recites a relay unit including, among other aspects, "wherein said power supply bus bar is configured to supply current to said

plurality of relays via respective fuses.” Minoura does not disclose at least this aspect of the invention either alone or in combination with the other aspects of the claimed invention.

Specifically, Minoura discloses a junction box 12 having a busbar 15 to supply a source current to fuselinks 20. The fuselinks 20 are connected in parallel and conduct current to the circuits 16 of the junction box 12. (Fig. 4; col. 3, lines 16-23). Minoura does not disclose, however, that “said power supply bus bar is configured to supply current to said plurality of relays via respective fuses.” Indeed, as shown in Fig. 4, the uppermost fuselink 20 is connected to more than one circuit 16, and thus, the busbar 15 supplies current to the two uppermost circuit 16 via only the upper most fuselink 20, and not “respective fuses” as set forth in independent claim 1. Accordingly, because Minoura does not disclose every aspect of the invention either alone or in combination with the other aspects of the claimed invention, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of independent claim 1 and its respective dependent claims 2-5 and 13-20.

Applicants further submit that claims 2-5 and 13-20 depend from independent claim 1, and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons that independent claim 1 is allowable. In addition, at least some of the dependent claims recite unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by Minoura and therefore at least some also are separately patentable.

In view of the foregoing remarks, this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's

reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In discussing the specification, claims, abstract, and drawings in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: May 27, 2004

By: _____



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